

LEE G. BOLMAN
TERRENCE E. DEAL

LEADING
with
SOUL

AN UNCOMMON JOURNEY OF SPIRIT

REVISED THIRD EDITION

Leading
with
Soul



Lee G. Bolman
Terrence E. Deal

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~

An Uncommon Journey of Spirit

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Leading
with
Soul



Prelude





In Search of Soul and Spirit

*All day I think about it, then at night I say it.
Where did I come from,
and what am I supposed to be doing?
I have no idea.
My soul is from elsewhere, I'm sure of that,
and I intend to end up there*

—Rumi

LEADING WITH SOUL



Soul. Spirit. The words sometimes sound strange to the modern ear. We rarely think or talk about where we came from or what we are here to do. But soul and spirit are vital companions whenever we ask what life is about and where our path is taking us. This book invites you to embark on a journey in search of meaning and purpose in a world gone crazy. In recent years we've all been stunned by one psychic shock after another. The horror of 9/11 and the age of perpetual terror that it signaled. The greenhouse effect, raising the specter that the energy we use to fuel civilization may eventually destroy it. A parade of business scandals—Enron, WorldCom, AIG, Madoff, BP's oil spill, the subprime mortgage debacle, and many more—making it hard to shake the belief that business leaders are short-sighted moral pygmies. The economic collapse of 2008 that shattered hope for people around the world and left millions haunted by fear and economic insecurity. A world adrift and out of control cries out for belief, hope, and inspired action.

Answering that poignant call for enlightenment and leadership at work is the goal of this book. It is a guide to the path we need to follow to find answers to questions none of us can escape. What can we hold on to? Where do we find solid footing? How can we create a better life and a better world? When each of us plunges into the depths of our being, there we



find soul, a bedrock sense of identity and meaning—who we are, what we care about, and what we are here to do. We also discover spirit, a transcendent universal sense of oneness.

Soul and spirit are related in the same way as peaks and valleys, male and female. They are intimately connected. Each needs the other. The two are so interconnected that the words are often used interchangeably, but we see an important distinction. Soul is personal and unique, grounded in the depths of individual experience. Spirit is transcendent and all embracing. It is the universal source, the oneness of all things. Adherents of the world's great religions name it Allah, Brahman, the Buddha, God, or Jahweh. Others find this source in love, nature, humanity, magic, or an ineffable sense of oneness with the cosmos. One clue to the universality of spirit is its recurrence as a central source of power and possibility in many of history's most popular films. In *Star Wars*, it is called "the force," in *Lord of the Rings*, it is "the One," the remote creator, Eru Iluvatar. In *The Matrix*, "the One" is personified as Neo. In *Avatar*, as in many cultural traditions, spirit is pantheistic—God is in everything.

Soul and spirit are rooted in hope and faith—the things we believe even if they cannot be proven. Hope is the faith that dies last, the stubborn belief in new possibilities and a better tomorrow. Too often today's travails leave us in an existential void. We



have a haunting sense that somewhere along the line we got off track. We're working harder than ever, but we're not really sure why. We feel a vague emptiness as we rush madly through life, hoping that we can escape if we keep running. Deep down, we fear we're losing the race. The need to reinfuse life at work with spirit, passion, and zest is greater than ever. "As millions of Americans arrive at their place of employment, the unfortunate reality is that many see their work environment not as an opportunity, but as a place of mundane misery."¹ Work satisfaction among American workers in 2009 reached the lowest level ever recorded. "It says something troubling about work in America. It is not about the business cycle or one grumpy generation," says Linda Barrington of the Conference Board, which sponsored the survey. Our spiritual malaise and longing for something more need to be filled with spirit and faith. Those are the gifts that leaders with soul bring to organizations.

The Spiritual Path

The search for soul and spirit is a quest for depth, meaning, and faith transcending boundaries of gender, age, geography, and race. It's as fresh and specific to our time as the latest high-tech gadget. It's a counterforce to the modern technical mind-set that can toss people into orbit and put a smartphone in every pocket,



yet provides few answers for bringing joy to life, meaning to work, or integrity and conviction to leadership.

This movement travels an age-old path that is not confined to religious or mystical traditions. Atheists and Muslims, Christians and Humanists, Agnostics, Buddhists, and many more all embark on the same quest. They see different things along the way, but all seek answers to the same fundamental spiritual questions that are basic to being human. Even the rationalism that governs much of managerial thinking serves for some as a spiritual anchor. The view that people and organizations are essentially rational entities that respond to incentives is a powerful tool in managerial practice. It also serves as a theology for many adherents, but one that is often unfulfilling because it cuts believers off from soul and spirit.

Our approach is inclusive, open to all these perspectives and more. If you arrive deeply committed to your religious faith, join us on the journey. If you are convinced that the idea of God is absurd or traditional religion is mere superstition, we welcome you as well. Regardless of where you begin, we honor your search and seek to support it. Our goal is not to teach a specific theology or philosophy but to pose questions and stimulate reflection to help you deepen the faith you have or find the one you need. We invite you to become a coauthor.

LEADING WITH SOUL



Treat the stories and ideas in these pages as a stimulus and a starting point. Fill in the gaps you find in what we have produced by writing your own story and exploring your own path. Look for opportunities to share your reflections and questions with others. We hope the book can guide you on the journey of the soul that is vital to building inspired and inspiring leadership.

Over the centuries, people have found meaning in work, family, community, and shared belief. They have drawn upon shared resources to do what they could not do alone. United efforts—raising a barn, shoring up a levee, rescuing earthquake victims, celebrating a marriage, or singing a hymn—have brought people together, created enduring bonds, and exemplified the possibilities in collective spirit. Such traditional sources of meaning, energy, and achievement are increasingly endangered in a world of fleeting, virtual relationships. Individuals ponder a question posed two thousand years ago: What does it profit us if we gain the world but lose our souls?² It is no surprise that signs of spiritual hunger and restlessness are everywhere. Many of us brought hope and optimism into the new millennium only to find that almost all our certitudes failed. It is time to embark on a journey to seek answers to the questions that Rumi posed at the beginning of this chapter. Where did we come



from? What are we here to do? What is the meaning of our life? What is our destiny?

Soulful Leadership

We hope that this book will stimulate a journey in search of your leadership gifts. Each of us has a special contribution to make if we can shoulder the personal and spiritual work needed to discover and share our own gifts. Across sectors and levels, organizations are starved for the leadership they need. Leaders who have lost touch with their souls, who are confused and uncertain about their core values and beliefs, inevitably lose their way or sound an uncertain trumpet.

A growing movement seeks to recapture the essence that soul and spirit can bring to the modern workplace and its environment. As Matthew Fox writes: “Life and livelihood ought not to be separated but to flow from the same source, which is Spirit, for both life and livelihood are about Spirit. Spirit means life, and both life and livelihood are about living in depth, living with meaning, purpose, joy, and a sense of contribution to the greater community. A spirituality of work is about bringing life and livelihood back together again. And spirit with them.”³

Leading with soul brings meaning and purpose back to workplaces that have lost them. It goes beyond technology, efficiency,



and the bottom line to meet human needs for success and fulfillment. Spirited leadership fires motivation, deepens loyalty, and galvanizes performance. It reinfuses soul and spirit, marrying the two so that spirit feeds soul and soul enriches spirit. Committed and passionate leaders find their soul's treasure store and offer its gifts to others.⁴

The chapters ahead explore why soul, spirit, faith, and hope belong at the heart of leadership. They do this through a dialogue between a beleaguered leader and a wise sage. Over the centuries, spiritual leaders of all traditions and faiths have taught and learned through example, story, and dialogue. Sufi and Christian parables, Zen koans, the Jewish Haggadah, Hindu legends, and Native American stories are but a few examples. In our story, you are invited to join Steve Camden, a highly successful, fast-track manager who has run into an existential wall, as he works with Maria, a spiritual mentor.

Our Journey

This book began as a product of providence rather than planning. It was an unexpected calling that emerged during an informal lunch with colleagues at our publisher, Jossey-Bass. We arrived that day with a list of potential book projects, all well within our social science comfort zone. Partway through the



meeting, Lynn Luckow, then president of Jossey-Bass, interrupted the conversation's flow to ask a simple, inspired question: "What do you really want to do? Blue-sky it." Silence fell over the breaking of bread and sipping of wine as we both gradually realized the awful truth: we didn't know what we really wanted to do. Out of that silence came a surprising reply: "We'd like to do a book about leadership and spirit." (Thanks again, Lynn, for being the godfather of this project.)

That answer put us on an unfamiliar and scary path. We had committed to write a book with only a hazy idea of where we were going and what we had to say. Fortunately, many friends and colleagues came to our rescue with ideas and support. We plunged into the great spiritual literature from around the world: the Tao, the Koran, the Bible, the Bhagavad-Gita, Sufi poetry, Native American mythology, African American folk tales, the Tibetan Book of the Dead, and many other works. All these helped greatly, but they were not enough. We also had to go deep inside to find our own spiritual centers. We couldn't write about anyone else's spiritual journey without examining and deepening our own. We couldn't talk about soul and spirit without experiencing firsthand what they meant for us.

For Terry, this journey triggered a conversation with his wife, Sandy, that eventually led him to give up a tenured position at



Vanderbilt University so that he and Sandy could fulfill their dream of returning home to California to design and build a house on the central coast. It also enabled him to revisit a painful chapter in his life that he had neglected for many years—the tragic death in 1964 of his five-year-old son Barry. The impact on Lee was equally profound—difficult but essential reappraisals of a painful divorce and the death of his father, a recommitment to religious faith, and a move to Kansas City and the University of Missouri after more than twenty years at Harvard University.

This story is a parable drawn from our own lives and the lives of others we have known. We hope it speaks to you. To assist your reflections, we punctuate the story with a series of interludes—meditations on the issues and questions raised in the story. Walt Whitman captures our hopes for your journey:

Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only,
Reckless O soul, exploring, I with thee,
and thou with me,
For we are bound where mariner has not yet
dared to go,
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.⁵

The Search





The Heart of Leadership Lives in the Hearts of Leaders

He was tired, and it was getting dark. He'd driven three hours up mountain roads. Not by choice. Why had John sent him? Who was this woman he was supposed to meet? He didn't know, and didn't like not knowing. He liked to read a review before seeing a movie or reading a book.



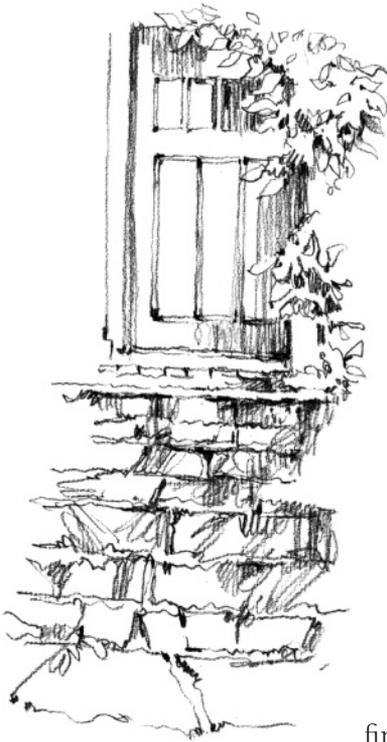
His name was Steven Camden. Like the city in New Jersey. He grew up in New Jersey, but in Newark, not Camden. Not that it made much difference. Tough neighborhoods in both places. He'd survived one of the toughest.

The house was low, made of wood and glass. A candle flickering in a window. *Faux rustic or Asian or something*, he thought. He bounded up the maple-

leaf-matted fieldstone steps at his usual brisk pace, but he felt more puzzled than confident.

He knocked on the door. He waited. Was she here? She knew he was coming, didn't she? She must know he had better things to do than just stand on her doorstep. Hadn't John told her how busy he is? He looked again and she was there.

Her name was Maria. He first noticed her eyes: deep,





brown, full of something he recognized but could not name. Once inside, he looked around the room. Mostly he noticed the Japanese art. It was like a gallery. Yet something was missing.

You've spent time in Japan, he said.

She nodded. Many years. Every piece is a memory.

I lived in Tokyo two years myself. For him, Tokyo had been endless business meetings. No time for galleries. His only souvenirs came from the airport duty-free shop.

She seemed to be waiting.

Was he supposed to make the next move? Where to begin? Blurt out his worries to a woman he barely knew? He tried to buy time. John seems to have a lot of confidence in you, he said.

We're old friends. I knew him back when he was starting the business. We've become even closer since he retired. I've learned a lot from him.

She seemed to be waiting again. Now what? He'd always been good with words. Where were they now?

Do you feel uncomfortable here? she asked.

No. He hesitated. Well, maybe a little. Maybe I shouldn't have come.

Have some tea.



He watched her pour the tea. He wanted coffee, but took the tea.

You've been working hard?

All my life. He sipped his tea. Green tea. Reminded him of Japan. He'd ordered it many times. *Nihon cha, kudasai*. A comforting sense of nostalgia.

Why? she asked.

Why what? He'd lost track.

Why do you work so hard?

He paused. What kind of question was that? Why does anyone work hard? It's what you do. It's how I got where I am.

Do you like where you are?

Of course. He was lying. He knew it. Did she? Probably. Well, maybe not. Not as much as I used to.

What's changed?

He hesitated. Was he walking into a trap? Should he leave? Or tell the truth? He vaguely imagined John looking over his shoulder. *Why be scared of this woman?* he wondered. Then, a second thought. *What do I have to lose?*

I was promoted a year ago. Running one of our biggest divisions. I was sure I was ready.

And now?